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Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 NEA-10 SS-20 SSO-00 EURE-00 DRC-01

RSC-01 /058 W
---------- 115767
O 291615Z NOV 73
FM AMEMBASSY ROME
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2107

S E C R E T ROME 13241

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: OVIP (KISSINGER, HENRY A.), IT
SUBJECT: US RELATIONS WITH ITALY: AN ASSESSMENT

REF: STATE 231853

1. DESPITE RECENT INTRA-ALLIANCE SHOCKS, U.S. RELATIONS WITH ITALY ARE EXCELLENT IN ALL MAJOR AREAS: GOVERNMENT TO GOVERNMENT, PEOPLE TO PEOPLE AND IN TRADE AND INVESTMENT. THIS SITUATION BASICALLY REFLECTS IMPORTANCE OF THE NATO ALLIANCE FOR ITALY'S EXTERNAL AND INTERNAL SECURITY, THE EXISTENCE OF TIES OF FAMILY, THE RESIDUAL RATITUDE FOR THE AMERICAN ROLE IN ITALY IN THE EARLY POSTWAR PERIOD, AND MUTUAL COOPERATION AND ACCOMMODATION OVER A PERIOD OF THIRTY YEARS.

2. THE MIDDLE EAST WAR AND ITS DIVISIVE EFFECTS ON THE ALLIANCE WERE FELT IN ITALY OF COURSE. ASSURANCES OF OUR CONTINUED COMMIT-MENT TO CLOSE CONSULTATION HAVE BEEN WELCOMED, AND THE BRIEFING BY ASSISTANT SECRETARY SISCO WAS PARTICULARLY WELL RECEIVED. IN THE ITALIAN CASE, HOWEVER, DURING THE HOSTILITIES LITTLE WAS ASKED BY THE U.S., AND NOTHING REFUSED BY THE GOI. ITALIAN RESPONSE TO OUR REQUEST IN NATO FOR APPROACHES TO SOVIETS AND EAST EUROPEANS WAS PROMPT, AND THE GOI GAVE US THE MAXIMUM REQUESTED IN OVERFLIGHTS FROM TEL AVIV TO GERMANY TO RETURN "REFORGER" TROOPS TO CONUS (THAT IS, REFUELING STOPS IN ITALY WERE APPROVED). THE INITIAL SHOCK OF THE SITUATION HAS NOW GIVEN WAY TO MILD UNEASE WHIC IS FED, HOWEVER, BY ITALIAN-FELT NEED FOR EUROPEAN CONSENSUS AND PARTICIPATION IN EC POSITION WITH WHICH WE DO NOT CONCUR.
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3. THERE ARE TWO IMMEDIATE PROBLEM AREAS IN US-ITALIAN RELATIONS. ONE IS BURDEN-SHARING, WHERE ITALIAN ABILITY TO RESPOND IN A NATO CONTEXT IS HAMPERED BY EXTREMELY DIFFICULT BUDGETARY SITUATION. THE ENERGY CRISIS IS MORE COMPLEX PROBLEM. ITALY, ALTHOUGH THE MOST VULNERABLE OF THE EUROPEANS TO OIL REDUCTIONS, IS HOLDING FIRM WITH ITS EC PARTNERS AND ACCEPTING CONSUMER AUSTERITY WHICH IS ALREADY CAUSING POLITICAL
RUMBLINGS FROM THE LEFT. FURTHER CUTBACKS WOULD PUT THE GOI UNDER UNBERABLE PRESSURE IF THE CONOMY SHOULD BEGIN TO GRIND TO A HALT.

4. THERE ARE OTHER PROBLEMS WHICH MAY MATURE IN THE FUTURE. THE YOUNGER GENERATION WHICH WILL SOON BEGIN TO TAKE POLITICAL POWER HAS A SHARPER, MORE CRITICAL PERCEPTION OF THE UNITED STATEQS AND ITS POLICIES. THE DEVELOPMENT OF GREATER COHESION BY THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY COULD EASILY BE IN CONFLICT WITH THE CLOSENESS OF OUR BILATERAL

RELATIONSHIP. THERE ARE DOMESTIC ITALIAN PROBLEMS WHICH MUST BE RESOLVED IF THE POSSIBILITY OF A FUTURE INSTITUTIONAL CRISIS IS TO BE AVOIDED. IN PARTICULAR THE COMMUNIST PARTY POLLS ALMOST THREE VOTES OUT OF TEN AND DOMINATES THE MAJOR ITALIAN TRADE UNION. THE COMMUNIST PRESENCE, AND THE PONDEROUS AND INSUFFICIENT RESPONSE OF THE DEMOCRATIC PARTIES TO ITALY'S NEED FOR MAJOR REFORM OF ITS POLITICAL, GOVERNMENTAL AND SOCIAL STRUCTURE, POSE REAL PROBLEMS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF MODERN DEMOCRATIC PROCESSES OVER THE LONG TERM

5. OTHER PROBLEMS, OF MORE DIRECT BILATERAL IMPORT, ARE MINOR. THEY ARE STATUS-OF-FORCES TAX QUESTIONS (DUNN-VANNONI), BILATERAL CIVIL AVIATION PROBLEMS, OUR STEEL SCRAP EMBARGO; AND THEY WILL BE UNHAPPY IF WE REMOVE TAX INCENTIVES FOR U.S. INVESTMENT IN SOUTHERN ITALY, AS PROPOSED IN THE TRADE REFORM BILL.

6. IN SUM, OUR RELATIONS WITH ITALY HAVE TRADITIONALLY GONE VERY WELL ITALIAN GOOD WILL CANNOT BE TAKEN FOR GRANTED, HOWEVER, EITHER IN THE SHORT TERM OR OVER THE LONG HAUL. WE MUST CONTINUE THE CLOSE CONTACTS WE MAINTAIN AT ALL LEVELS WITH ITALIAN DEMOCRATIC POLITICAL PARTIES AND
MOLDERS OF PUBLIC OPINION, AND THE UNENDING TASK OF REACHING AND PERSUADING THE MATURING GENERATION OF ITALIAN LEADERS. WE MUST DEMONSTRATE
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THAT
THERE IS NO ANOMALY BETWEEN CLOSE RELATIONS WITH THE U.S. AND THE DEMANDS
ON ITALY CONCOMITANT WITH PARTICIPATION IN A MORE UNITED EUROPE. WE MUST
CONTINUE TO CONSULT CLOSELY AND SERIOUSLY WITH ITALY. ITALIAN-AMERICAN

RELATIONS WILL DETERIORATE UNLESS ITALY IS CONSIDERED AS AN EQUAL OF

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BRITIAN, FRANCE AND GERMANY IN ANY CONSULTATIONS, VISITATIONS, ETC.
THAT
TAKE PLACE. I BELIEVE IF THEY ARE INCLUDED IN CONSULTATIONS INVOLVING
THE OTHER THREE COUNTRIES WE CAN CONTINUE TO COUNT ON THEM AS A STRONG

PARTNER. I HAVE EVERY CONFIDENCE THAT WITH DUE CARE AND ATTENTION TO
THE ABOVE WE CAN RETAIN OUR VALUABLE ASSETS IN ITALIAN COOPERATION
AND GOOD WILL. VOLPE

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: n/a
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 29 NOV 1973
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: worrelsw
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1973ROME13241
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: n/a
From: ROME
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1973/newtext/t1973115/aaaaadio.tel
Line Count: 123
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: STATE 231853
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: worrelsw
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 18 SEP 2001
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <18-Sep-2001 by kelleyw0>; APPROVED <07 MAR 2002 by worrelsw>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: US RELATIONS WITH ITALY: AN ASSESSMENT
TAGS: OVIP, IT, (KISSINGER, HENRY A)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005

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